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Personality Parade
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Q. Why do historians blame the Cuban Bay of Pigs fiasco on President Jack Kennedy? Wasn't it really President Eisenhower's fault?—David Leeds, Cambridge, Mass.

A. It was President Eisenhower who gave Allen Dulles, then in charge of the Central Intelligence Agency, the go-ahead on the agency's plan to train and equip Cuban exiles in the United States to invade Cuba and overthrow Castro.

When President Kennedy took office, he foolishly followed the advice of his military and permitted what was obviously an ill-prepared invasion of Cuba. This resulted in the Bay of Pigs fiasco for which he generously assumed the blame. Similarly, when Lyndon Johnson succeeded to the Presidency, he, too, followed the advice of the military and continued the fiasco Kennedy had begun in Vietnam. The reluctance of incumbent Presidents to alter the foreign policy of their predecessors is one of the great weaknesses of the American Presidency.